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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1891.

The President's Politics.

President HARRISON in his message to Congress yesterday devotes no little space to the question of how the electors of President and Vice-President should be chosen, taking up his pen to the action of the Michigan Legislature in districting that State for their election. Our readers know that we have recorded this as an important matter, and have expressed surprise that it had received no more notice than it had at the hands of the press. We saw it—and said so—a scheme that might test the stability of our free institutions.

The President gives the facts as to how the electors of President have heretofore been chosen. The plan finally evolved was a vote upon a general ticket, and by the people. He thinks it a "threatening episode" that this plan should be in danger of being departed from. He wants no "gerrymandering" in presidential elections. He says the States that still give their approval to the old prevailing method may well consider whether a constitutional amendment ought not to be made and ratified providing against this danger to our Government, or this departure from the practice of all the States.

We must say that the President writes well upon this subject, though the party that stole the presidency in 1877, and has been in the interest of the Republicans, is hardly the party to say much about Michigan's act in bringing, as the President says it does, the "gerrymander" into presidential elections. The President knows of one State (Mississippi, we suppose) where one legislative district has 65,000 population, another 15,000, and still another 10,000. The methods of the "gerrymander," says the President, have already found effective application to the choice of United States senators and members of the national House of Representatives, and in Michigan an evil start has been made towards making them applicable in presidential elections. We shall then, he adds, have all three of the great departments of the Government in the grasp of the "gerrymander."

Here the President goes too far, and says that the Constitution did not confer unrestricted power upon the States when it provided that electors of President should be chosen as the legislatures of the several States might provide. He has no good reason for making this remark. History tells us that the power has always been regarded as absolute. This question we may discuss hereafter.

The President makes at this point what may be considered a reference to the force bill. Nothing, he says, is more important than to provide every guaranty for the absolute, fair, and free choice of all the officers of the national Government. Suppression or perversion of the popular suffrage is the chief "national danger." Not so, Mr. President. Congress cannot do this work of guarding elections as well as the several States. Read over the force bill, and you will see with its conversion into a law, free government will have departed from this country never to return.

The President then makes an appeal to the members of both parties to unite in framing a measure to ward off the perils he has described. He also returns to the subject of the "gerrymander" as it may affect the results in presidential elections. He wants "constitutional or statutory changes." We object to the latter. The former we will not object to. The President believes it would be possible to secure a non-partisan commission to do this work. He unfortunately for his argument and his party suggests that the Supreme Court of the United States might appoint the commission!

All that the President says on these subjects is couched in appropriate language. He handles the subject with an appearance of candor. It is more important as any other that he discusses.

Points from the President's Message.

1. Terms satisfactory to this Government have been agreed upon with Great Britain for the adjustment of the long-pending controversy as to the *Alabama* and *Florida*, and an agreement as to the arbitrators is all that is necessary to the completion of the convention.

2. Provision should be made for a joint demarcation of the frontier line between Canada and the United States.

3. Germany, Denmark, Italy, Austria, and France have opened their markets to inspected American pork.

4. The outlines of an agreement have been reached with Germany looking to "equitable trade concessions, in connection with the continued importation of German sugars," but the time has not yet come to submit this correspondence to Congress.

5. Our Government has expressed its solicitude for the maintenance of peace in Brazil, and this "counsel was received in the most friendly spirit," and the "latest information is that constitutional government has been re-established without bloodshed."

6. The *lynching at New Orleans* of eleven members of the Mafia Society is spoken of as "deplorable and discreditable." He believes that a friendly conclusion of the unsettled questions with Italy is "attainable." The withdrawal of the Italian Minister from Washington is referred to as "the temporary absence of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Italy." He thinks it would be entirely competent for Congress to make advances against the treaty-rights of foreigners domiciled in the United States cognizable in the Federal courts. It seems to him, in the absence of such a law, "that the officers of the State charged with police and judicial powers in such cases must, in the consideration of international questions, be regarded as Federal agents," and this view "makes this Government answerable for their acts where it would be answerable if the United States had used its constitutional power to define and punish the crime against treaty-rights." The whole tone of this part of the message is conciliatory, and is intended, no doubt, to cause Italy to resume the correspondence.

7. Much is said concerning our relations with China. The latest incident is rehearsed. The policy of the Government with reference to *Blanco* is defended. "No official complaint of the conduct of our Minister."

later, or of our naval officers during the struggle has been presented to this Government. The treatment "of our Minister for a time was such as to call for a friendly protest," and thereupon the "unfriendly measures" were relaxed. The attack upon our sailors at Valparaiso is related at some length. A correspondence had with the Chilean Government evoked a letter "in an offensive tone." At present he is awaiting the result of the investigation being made in the Criminal Court of Valparaiso, and he will, if necessary, send in a special message on the subject.

9. There is an insurrection in China and violence has been done to some foreigners. The Chinese Government has declined to receive Mr. Blain on the ground that he was a participant, while senator, in the enactment of anti-Chinese laws. This view the President holds to be untenable. 9. He recommends that we accept Spain's invitation to participate in the celebration, at Madrid, in 1892, of the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America.

10. This Government has found occasion to express in a friendly spirit, but with much earnestness, to the Government of the Czar its serious concern because of the harsh measures now being enforced against the Hebrews in Russia. "It is estimated that over one million will be forced from Russia in a few years."

11. The Nicaragua Canal enterprise is commended. He urges that its bonds be guaranteed by the United States Government, and asks that "neither party nor sectional lines" be drawn on this great question.

12. International copyright has been secured with Belgium, France, and Great Britain and the British possessions and Switzerland. A special convention has been held with Germany for the attainment of a like object.

13. As to the McKinley tariff, alleged statistics are produced to show that it has been beneficial to the country. He declares that "agitation for radical changes in tariff and financial legislation cannot help but materially impede business, to the propriety of which some degree of stability in legislation is essential." The report of the Secretary of the Treasury shows that the total receipts of the Government from all sources for the fiscal year were \$581,544,233, while the expenditures were \$421,301,470. For the present fiscal year the estimated receipts are \$455,336,350 and expenditures \$410,300,000. A small margin! The truth is that a deficit is almost unavoidable. This comes from loose pension legislation.

14. He damns silver with faint praise and recommends "that our business interests be spared the distracting influence which threats of radical change always impart. Under existing legislation it is in the power of the Treasury Department to maintain that essential condition of national finance—as well as of commercial prosperity—the parity in use of the coin dollars and their paper representatives. The assurance that these powers would be freely and unhesitatingly used has done much to produce and sustain the present favorable business conditions." He is "still" of the opinion "that the free coinage of silver would disastrously affect our business interests at home and abroad." A full coinage of silver should be made "just as soon as the co-operation of other nations can be secured and a ratio fixed that will give circulation equally to gold and silver." Our circulation per capita is now \$24.38.

15. The War Department through its Secretary reports that desertions from the army are now fewer than ever before in its history. Progress is being made in shore defenses. It is recommended that smokeless powder and better rifles be furnished to our soldiers. The experiment of enlisting Indians has been satisfactory. There are now seven companies and seven more are being organized.

16. Chinese are still stealing into the United States by way of British Columbia. Defects in the law should be remedied.

17. He recommends that the jurisdiction of the United States Courts be extended so "as to make triable therein any felony committed while in the act of violating a law of the United States." This refers to the killing of court officers, jurors, etc., while in the discharge of their duties.

18. Various reforms are recommended, including free deliveries in smaller cities and towns; an idea first advanced by the Dispatch. He also recommends "a modified use of the telegraph" in connection with the postal service. Success is claimed for the ocean-mail subsidy law.

19. To our Navy the Newark, Concord, Bennington, and Miantonomah have been added during the year with an aggregate of more than 11,000 tons, while twenty-four war-ships of all classes are now under construction in the navy-yards and private shops.

20. The Indian Question is briefly discussed, and schools and farms for them suggested. He also intimates his belief that the five independent tribes should accept citizenship and be given a representative in Congress.

21. The administration of the Pension Bureau, he says, "has been characterized by great diligence." The number of pensions January 1, 1891, was 676,160.

22. A commission for dealing with *subsidized railroads* against which the Government has claims is recommended.

23. The Census Bureau's work is commended as "careful and intelligent," and it is alleged that it has secured the approval of statisticians who have followed its methods with scientific and non-partisan interest.

24. Legislation is recommended to prevent monopolists from acquiring possession of the water-courses in the arid lands of the Territories. The polygamists in Utah have been brought to their senses by the Exclusion law, but the President is afraid to trust them as a State. Hence he would keep them in a territorial condition, especially as by so doing (though he does not say it) the Democrats are deprived of two senators.

25. The work of the Agricultural Department is stated and eulogized. Great credit is claimed for it in improving the farmers' condition and in opening new markets to our produce.

26. The Civil-Service system is regarded by the President as "incomparably fairer and better than that of appointments by favor."

27. Legislation for the protection of the lives of railroad employees is urged. His idea is to amend the interstate commerce law so as to compel every railroad engaged in interstate commerce to use automatic freight-car couplers and air-brakes.

28. A Constitutional Amendment regulating the election of electors for President and Vice-President is recommended. He does not like the Michigan district plan. Gerrymanders are deplored. The force bill is, incidentally, commended.

The Governor's Oyster Message.

The oyster question has lagged superfluously on the stage in Virginia for a longer time even than the public debt matter; but we trust that the hour for the solution of both has nearly arrived.

That the oyster industry is a great one and that it is deserving of the fostering care of the Commonwealth all admit, but every attempt to secure appropriate legislation has resulted in dissatisfaction and disappointment. While the planters, dredgers, and tongs men have refused to agree among themselves all have joined in criticizing legislation that to the up-country people at least seemed wise and fair. Meanwhile the existing laws are notoriously inadequate and are not always well executed, and the Commonwealth has not been as fully reimbursed as she should have been for the money that she has expended in the maintenance of "the oyster navy," while the natural beds of the oysters have been depleted to a lamentable extent.

He has endeavored to view the whole question in its political and economic aspects both, and has said that while Virginia is entitled to recover all the money that she pays out for the protection of the oyster-beds and to get some profit besides, it is her duty first to define clearly what is planting and what are tongs or dredging.

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PULMONIC SYRUP.

the natural guardian of the lungs against all inflammations and congestions, and the mighty protector of their tissues and secretions. The deadliest enemy of mankind! You have a tallman in the FORTUNE SYRUP who prescribes no money of the lungs can withstand. As an aid to nature, open all the secretions. Free the stomach, liver, and bowels by means of

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and set your entire system to healthy work. Even the monster, PNEUMONIA, thus falls of its deadly grip, and does as a thief in the night. The PNEUMONIC SYRUP is the place—these on guard and all is well.

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grounds, and that she should give to the planters such a leasehold as will warrant them in making expenditures, the profits of which can only be reaped in years to come.

Custom has given the planters, dredgers, and tongs rights which they will be slow to relinquish, and to attempt to take these from them would be to meet with an outcry which would be heard all over Virginia. But the Commonwealth has rights, too, and money should not be drawn from the common treasury to be spent in the protection of oysters when the industry can and should be made self-supporting, to say the least.

That any net revenue of consequence could be drawn from this source at present we have not believed; but there always has been an absence of reliable data, and it was with satisfaction that we heard that Governor McKewen was going to give this subject careful study. Ever since he came to the gubernatorial chair this matter has interested him, and we know that he has devoted months to an investigation of it. He has been diligent, painstaking, and conscientious in his inquiries, and on yesterday he reported to the General Assembly the results of his labors.

The Governor thinks that he sees in the oyster-beds of the Commonwealth a revenue for Virginia of \$3,000,000 per annum; not in the immediate present, but in years to come. One of his recommendations to this end is that the planting-grounds be leased to the highest bidder. We are sure that this will be such an innovation upon the precedents of two centuries that the people will not consent to it. It may be that they consider as their own what is really the State's property; but to correct this error at once will be an almost hopeless task.

The auction system might do very well for the grounds not taken up by residents, but will hardly be practicable for such as have been held as belonging—almost to the farms adjacent. His suggestion of a ten years' term of lease is excellent. To selling the grounds he is utterly opposed and we believe that there are constitutional objections in the way too. He would lay a license-tax on the common tongs and dredgers. "The patent tongs" he classes as a dredge. "If this license-tax is opposed by tongs men, and they are sustained by the courts, I would advise that the Legislature at once take steps to modify the second section of the tenth article of the Constitution in this regard." He says he would like also to have a license-tax imposed on pound and purse-net.

In concluding his message Governor McKewen makes several recommendations, which we abbreviate as follows: 1. There should be a Shell-Fish Commission. 2. There should be a survey of all the oyster-lands in the State. 3. All of the oyster-lands outside of the natural beds belonging to the State, which have never been disposed of by her, should be divided into lots. 4. The detail of a competent officer from the United States Fish Commission to make the survey should be secured. 5. The plats and survey so made should be as conclusive as legislation can make them, and the boundaries of the natural beds, etc., should be duly recorded in a suitable book kept by the Shell-Fish Commission for the purpose. 6. The Shell-Fish Commission should have control over the natural beds and of the oyster-lands not disposed of. The Legislature should clearly define what is a natural bed or rock, &c., for the guidance of the commission. 7. Upon the determination of the location and area of the oyster-grounds and the natural beds, the same should be published for the information of those whom it may concern. 8, 9, 10, and 11 refer to shortening the season and to license-taxes. 12. There should be a culling law enforced by proper penalties.

Certainly there are a number of suggestions here to which no objection can be made, and which, if adopted, will mark a great stride in the solution of a heretofore unsolvable problem.

We acknowledge our indebtedness to the Western Union Telegraph Company for a copy of the President's message, which was received here over its wires in good shape and at an early hour yesterday morning. All of its newspaper patrons in the large cities throughout the country were likewise favored, and it not only saved them telegraphic tolls, but came to hand earlier than would have been possible otherwise.

The election held in the Eighth congressional district yesterday resulted in the triumph of Hon. E. E. MANNING by more than 4,000 majority. He will succeed the late General W. H. F. LEE.

General William B. Taliaferro.

The Norfolk News and Courier speaks of the sentiment of a great number of Virginians when it says and says well the following of General William B. Taliaferro, of Gloucester:

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